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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, You stretch out the starry curtain of the Heavens. May Your Name be kept holy. As our law-makers depend on Your guidance, keep their feet on the path You have chosen. Lord, inspire them to make a commitment to always do what is right as You give them the wisdom to discern it. Open Your hands to bless their work, supplying their needs out of the bounty of Your celestial riches. Mighty God, may Your glory continue forever.

Lord, thank You for the commitment and competence of the great spring 2022 Senate page class. Bless them as they prepare to leave us tomorrow.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 9, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. ROSEN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3967, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3967), to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Tester/Moran amendment No. 5051, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 5065 (to amendment No. 5051), to add an effective date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this year we have already seen more mass shootings in America than we have had days in the year—more than one a day on average. The prevalence of guns, their ease of access, and the hateful motivations of mass shooters have all mixed into a toxic brew that is tearing America apart. People are asking,

what is going on, and why can't Congress protect us?

Yesterday, our House colleagues heard from those affected most: the parents of a young girl murdered in Uvalde, a student who played dead by covering herself in her friend's blood, and the mom of a Buffalo survivor who painted the gruesome picture of the bullet holes on her son's neck, back, and leg.

These were harrowing, gut-wrenching testimonies. That Congress has not acted in decades in response to these acts of violence is shameful. It used to be different. About 30 years ago, I was the author of the Brady bill and worked with Republicans and law enforcement to get strong gun safety laws passed. That was a different era. But the lesson from back then remains clear today: The right laws can make a real difference in reducing gun deaths. Because those laws were on the books, it is very likely that tens of thousands of people are alive and healthy who would not have been.

Right now, the Senate is trying to break that streak of inaction—the 30-year streak of inaction since we were able to pass Brady and the assault weapons ban—by working toward meaningful legislation on gun violence.

Yesterday, a bipartisan group of Democrats and Republicans met again to continue working toward a bipartisan compromise. This morning, my colleague Senator MURPHY reported that the group is making good progress, and they hope to get something real done very soon. As soon as the bipartisan group comes to agreement, I want to bring a measure to the floor for a vote as quickly as possible.

The overwhelming consensus of our caucus, of gun safety advocates, and of the American people is that getting something real done on gun violence is worth pursuing, even if we cannot get everything that we know we need.

The work of curing our Nation of mass shootings will continue well after

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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this debate concludes. But at this moment, we have a moral obligation to try for real progress because taking tangible steps to reduce gun violence is critically important.

Americans are sick and tired of going through the same grieving cycle over and over again, only for Congress to do nothing. They are enraged that even after shootings in Sandy Hook, Parkland, San Bernardino, El Paso, Boulder, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and so many others, that nothing—nothing—has changed.

We hope this time around something will change at last. I hope that very soon we can see a deal come together. I encourage my colleagues to keep their talks going so we can act on it very quickly.

JANUARY 6 HEARINGS

Madam President, on the January 6 hearings, tonight, the Nation will tune in to the House Select Committee on January 6 as they begin their first public hearings on the Capitol insurrection. Tonight's hearings will be a watershed moment in the fight to protect our democracy from the Big Lie of the hard right.

The committee will lay bare the truth that the American people must know; first, that there was tremendous violence. There are still many out there who say there wasn't violence. There was. The pictures show it. The eyewitnesses testify to it.

And the committee will lay bare the truth that the American people must know; that Donald Trump was at the heart of a coordinated effort to overturn the 2020 elections, to overturn our constitutional order, and inflict permanent damage upon our democracy. It will be essential viewing.

But in one of the most cowardly journalistic decisions in modern memory, FOX News—one of the biggest amplifiers of the Big Lie about January 6, about Donald Trump, and about the election—will not broadcast tonight's hearing.

FOX News's decision not to air the biggest hearing in modern history should end any debate that they are not a real news organization. FOX News is rapidly becoming a propaganda machine of the hard right, and it is as plain as day that they are scared of their viewers learning the truth about January 6.

FOX News's decision not to air the January 6 hearings is dangerous, cowardly, and shameful, given that they have spent more than a year spreading the Big Lie and misinforming their viewers.

Instead of telling the truth, they have isolated their viewers in an alternative reality of conspiracy theories that is immensely damaging to our democracy. Even the so-called liberal media which FOX News regularly attacks tries to tell both sides.

FOX News is afraid of telling both sides because they are afraid of the truth, and they are afraid their viewers may learn that FOX News has lied to them.

I urge FOX News to change course very soon. The press has an obligation—always has had that obligation—not to hide the truth from the American people, no matter how painful or inconvenient.

And as a nation, we have a duty to never forget what happened on January 6. The direct assault on our democracy and the dangers of that day, sadly, remain still with us.

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Madam President, now, on the PACT Act, a happier note, today, the Senate will continue consideration of the most important veteran healthcare expansion in decades, the PACT Act, authored by my colleagues Senators TESTER and MORAN—bipartisan.

We want to get this bill done as soon as we can. We can't have dilatory or destructive amendments to this bill because it is too important for our veterans' well-being to delay or destroy it.

For years, I have worked extensively with veterans, veterans service organizations, and advocates, including Jon Stewart and John Deal, who all say that the VA rules must be changed to ensure sick veterans get the care they need.

They volunteered, went off to war, and were exposed to toxins. That is a cost of war, and the American people cannot let them down.

The bill, which could benefit 3.5 million veterans who have been exposed to toxic chemicals in the line of duty, represents that change. For the sake of our veterans, there is no reason—no reason—not to pass this bill A-S-A-P, and I hope that is precisely what we can do.

SHIPPING

Madam President, on shipping, next week, the House is to vote on a much needed bill, passed unanimously by the Senate in April, to lower costs and relieve supply chains by reforming unfair shipping practices that hurt exporters and consumers alike.

Rising costs are top of the mind right now for the American people, and one of the more flummoxing causes of inflation is the crushing backlog that we are seeing at our ports. We have all seen the pictures of scores of ships lining up in ports, from Los Angeles to Savannah, to Seattle, to my home port of New York and New Jersey.

These backlogs have created serious price hikes. According to one study from earlier this year, the price to transport a container from China to the west coast of the United States costs 12 times—12 times—as much as it did 2 years ago, and the American consumer is paying the price. And it hurts both ways when shipping costs go up: It affects exports that we send overseas and imports that come back. It is a double whammy, whacking the American people's pocketbooks and wallets. At the end of the day, the American consumer ends up paying the higher price.

So I am very glad that the House will finally act on the Senate-passed ship-

ping bill next week. The shipping reform bill will help us lower costs. It will clear our ports, relieve our supply chains, and American families will feel the benefit.

I want to thank my colleagues Senators KLOBUCHAR and THUNE, the authors of the legislation, as well as the fine work of Senator CANTWELL, for leading this legislation earlier this year out of committee, onto the floor, and passing here in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 2 years ago, the Senate Democratic leader stood on the steps of the Supreme Court and threatened two Justices by name. "You will pay the price," he shouted. "You won't know what hit you." A month ago, after the precedent-breaking leak of a draft opinion, top Democrats intensified the reckless talk. Hillary Clinton said the Court was poised to "kill and subjugate women." Leader SCHUMER and Speaker PELOSI said the Court would be "ripp[ing] up the Constitution." Some of the most powerful people in the country pushing total hysteria over the possibility that Justices may—may—overturn a decision that even Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said was badly reasoned.

Far-left activists publicized Justices' private addresses and encouraged angry people to flock to their homes. President Biden and his White House were asked to condemn these intimidation tactics, and they refused. I wrote to Attorney General Garland about a month ago, asking why he wasn't enforcing the laws on the books already against judicial intimidation.

Look, everybody saw where this climate might lead. So, yesterday morning, U.S. marshals arrested a deranged person who traveled to Washington from California in order to assassinate a Supreme Court Justice at his house. He has reportedly been charged with attempted murder. The FBI says the would-be assassin was armed and equipped for a break-in. He told authorities that he was trying to think about how to give his life a purpose. Apparently, it was only when he came across the Justice's address posted online that it occurred to him to attempt a murder-suicide. He explained that his problem with this Justice was ideological, citing abortion and the Second Amendment.

While this would-be assassin was making his plan and traveling across

the country, House Democrats have spent weeks—weeks—blocking bipartisan legislation to strengthen security for the Justices and their families.

This bipartisan bill passed the Senate unanimously in early May. Chairman DURBIN is a strong supporter. But inexplicably—inexplicably—this urgent and uncontroversial bill has been sitting on Speaker PELOSI's desk ever since. The same House Democrats whose irresponsible rhetoric has contributed to this dangerous climate are themselves blocking added security for the Justices and their spouses and their children. Even last night—last night—even after this arrest was made, even after a leftwing group published an ominous social media post concerning a school that a Justice's children attend, when Leader MCCARTHY asked consent to pass the uncontroversial bill, House Democrats objected to it.

Meanwhile, the Biden Department of Justice, under Attorney General Garland, continues to flatly ignore section 1507 of the Criminal Code, which would appear to make it a Federal crime to protest at the homes of Federal judges to influence them over a pending case. That is the law right now.

So this has been a shameful and disturbing two-step from Washington Democrats. First they use reckless rhetoric that helps fuel the dangerous climate, and then they refuse to do their jobs and address the problem. The same far left that has spent years trying to improperly pressure the Court is now aiding and abetting this illegal intimidation campaign through total inaction.

So why won't President Biden call on his supporters to leave the Justices alone?

President Biden, call on your supporters to leave the Justices alone.

Why won't the Attorney General of the United States enforce existing law? Why won't the Speaker stop blocking a bipartisan security bill that passed the Senate unanimously?

So it is hard to avoid concluding that perhaps some Democrats may want this dangerous climate hanging over the Justices' heads as they finish up this term—a disgraceful—disgraceful—dereliction of duty. This is antithetical to the rule of law. The Speaker of the House and the Attorney General must honor their oaths to the Constitution and do their jobs.

I understand Democrats want to stage a big spectacle this week about what they claim is their opposition to political violence, but in reality, they are going out of their way to block concrete steps to prevent political violence.

FOREIGN POLICY

Madam President, now on an entirely separate matter, 1 year ago yesterday, the Biden administration announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan had reached a halfway point.

Analysis after analysis has confirmed what was clear to many of us in real

time: The President's shoddy plans for a reckless pullout were doomed to disaster from the start.

Back in February, an Army investigation found that in the run-up to President Biden's botched retreat, his senior national security and diplomatic advisers were "not seriously planning for an evacuation" and not paying attention to "what was happening on the ground." That is an Army investigation of the withdrawal.

Last month, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction blasted the administration's bad judgment before Congress. He explained that removing U.S. military and contractor support to our Afghan partners was "the single most important factor" in the collapse—the collapse—of Afghanistan's resistance to the Taliban.

It is not just that this giant policy failure should have been foreseeable to the Biden administration; it was, in fact, foreseen. Experts spent months warning that the President's policies would create chaos. I spent months saying the very same thing.

Now many of the worst predictions about the aftermath are coming true before our eyes. Our country and our partners are facing needlessly heightened risk from terrorists because of how the Biden administration botched Afghanistan. Yet the administration is still in denial.

In a letter to Congress just yesterday, the Commander in Chief claimed the United States "remains postured to address threats" to both our homeland and our interests "that may arise from inside Afghanistan." But the reality is that Pentagon leaders have been clear about the dramatic ways the withdrawal has limited our ability to identify, to target, and to strike terrorists in Afghanistan.

The former commander of U.S. Central Command says that forcing U.S. air assets to travel longer distances to reach Afghan airspace means severely limiting the time they can spend actually performing counterterrorism missions—just as we predicted.

A brandnew report from the lead inspector general for our ongoing counterterrorism operations further confirms that the Biden administration's mistakes have put us way, way behind the curve. Without human intelligence or bases in the country, the United States is already suffering from less insight into emerging terror threats. Our sources are drying up just as we predicted.

We haven't conducted a single strike against a military target in Afghanistan since the last military personnel left Kabul, and that isn't because there aren't any terrorists there. As the IG report confirms, it is because of "logistical challenges and limited intelligence."

The Taliban-Haqqani government in Kabul is not just a state sponsor of terrorism, it is literally a government made up of terrorists and kidnappers with deep ties to Al Qaeda.

Even as the Biden team continues to pretend that over-the-horizon operations are not inadequate in Afghanistan, they are implicitly acknowledging that same insufficiency in other theaters. Last month, President Biden redeployed U.S. troops to Somalia, reestablishing a limited but real presence intended to help local partners prevent their country from becoming a terrorist haven. So President Biden's own actions in Somalia give rise to the false claims in Afghanistan. In point of fact, the longest term vision about counterterrorism this White House has managed to lay out is their obsession—obsession—with someday shutting down the Guantanamo Bay detention center entirely.

I have yet to hear any coherent plans for what the Biden administration intends to do with the dangerous killers currently held there. Will they continue to rely on third countries to detain terrorists? That is the strategy that made possible the Taliban's massive jailbreak of thousands of hardened terrorists from Bagram after this administration fled Afghanistan.

Does the administration intend to send terrorists to Syria to be held indefinitely by a nongovernmental entity like the Syrian Defense Forces? In that case, how long is the Biden administration prepared to remain in Syria to make sure that ISIS, Hezbollah, or the Assad regime can't facilitate another giant jailbreak?

The American people and our coalition partners deserve a clear, coherent counterterrorism strategy that leaves our homeland safer and our partnerships stronger.

The Biden administration is providing, unfortunately, exactly the opposite.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, before I begin, I would like to express my dismay at House Democrats' decision last night to block legislation to provide enhanced security for Supreme Court Justices and their families.

Due to the unprecedented leak of an early draft of the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision and the resulting hysteria from members of the pro-abortion left, the Supreme Court asked Congress for additional authorities to protect Justices' families. This happened 4 weeks ago. And yesterday's arrest of an armed man near Justice Kavanaugh's home—a man who told police that he intended to kill a Supreme Court Justice and has been charged with attempted murder—made clear just how needed that protection is.

The Supreme Court security legislation in question passed the Senate unanimously 4 weeks ago but has faced inexplicable delays in the House of Representatives.

This should not be a partisan issue. The Senate Democratic Whip said just yesterday that the House should pass this legislation.

And I really thought that yesterday's arrest of an individual bent on assassinating a Supreme Court Justice would have forced House Democrats to abandon political gains and provide this urgently needed protection.

There is no excuse for further delay. One press report suggests that Democrats may be rethinking their opposition. I hope that is true. House Democrats should abandon the political games today and pass this legislation.

STUDENT LOANS

Madam President, recent reporting suggests that President Biden may be contemplating forgiving \$10,000 in Federal student loan debt per borrower. That is a bad idea for many reasons. It is difficult really to know where to start, but let me begin by pointing out the obvious: that forgiving \$10,000 in Federal student loan debt will do absolutely nothing to address the underlying problem and, in fact, would likely make things much worse.

The price of higher education has risen stratospherically in recent decades. The cost of 1 year of attendance at some colleges—just 1 year—is more than many Americans' yearly salaries. And that is a problem. But forgiving \$10,000 of student loan debt would do absolutely nothing to fix the problem of soaring tuition costs. As I said, it would very likely make things worse.

What incentive would colleges have to rein in costs if they could be confident that part of their students' bill would eventually be picked up by the Federal Government; because, of course, no one should be deceived into thinking that student loan forgiveness would be a one-time thing?

One estimate suggests that the student loan burden in this country would return to its current amount within 4 years—4 years—of \$10,000 in debt being forgiven, and calls to forgive more debt would undoubtedly come much sooner.

Future graduates are very likely to want the same deal that would be offered to graduates today—the wiping away of \$10,000 in debt—which brings us to another problem: some students opting to take on unrealistic levels of debt to finance their educations.

How much greater is that problem going to be if students think that the Government is likely to step in and forgive some of the debt that they have agreed to repay? It is very easy to imagine a student feeling free to take on more debt than he or she otherwise would, believing that the Government is likely to reduce the resulting debt burden.

Another massive problem with President Biden's plan is, of course, its complete unfairness. Under President

Biden's plan, an individual who just finished paying his or her student loans after years of work would not receive a penny. Meanwhile, a student who graduated a month ago and hasn't yet paid a dime on his or her loans could see a substantial part of his or her debt wiped away.

The President's plan is also incredibly unfair to the tens of millions of Americans without any student loan debt who would be asked to subsidize a student loan debt of a small percentage of Americans. Somewhere around two-thirds of millennials have no student debt, either because they didn't attend college or didn't take out any loans to attend college. The president's plan is unfair to those who avoided loans by working their way through school or choosing a lower-cost college option. It is unfair to parents who worked for years to ensure that they could finance their kids' education. And it is unfair to those who chose not to attend a traditional 4-year college and, instead, trained in one of the many essential trades we depend on, from plumbing to air conditioning to broadband installation, at a significantly lower-cost community college or technical school.

Another problem with the President's plan is what it would teach about the sanctity of contracts. While it may, at times, be ill-advised, students freely enter into the agreements when they take out a loan. Should we really be teaching that agreements and contracts mean nothing, that people can incur debt and then not have to pay it off?

Another important point to make here is that the average debt for undergraduate education in this country is not as crippling as it might be portrayed. Now, there is no question that there are students out there who were encouraged to take on unrealistic levels of debt and are currently struggling with huge debt burdens made up of private as well as Federal loans, but the average debt, the average debt for an undergraduate education is somewhere around \$29,000. That is not chump change, for sure, but it is also not an unmanageable level of debt for the average college graduate—especially with the availability of extended repayment plans and income-driven repayment programs.

Average student loan debt rises substantially for those with advanced degrees, and there are certainly those who take on far too much debt for graduate education, but it is also important to know that those with advanced degrees have higher—and in some cases much higher—earning potential.

Doctors, for example, take on medical debt north of \$190,000 on average, but once they have completed their education and training they can expect to make a robust—sometimes a very robust—six figures per year, making repaying debt of that size a very feasible proposition.

There is no question that the cost of higher education is out of control and

that students sometimes take on unrealistic levels of debt to pay for it. But forgiving student loan debt is not the answer for the reasons I have mentioned, among others. Instead, we should be exploring ways to drive down education costs.

We should be also highlighting affordable education options like our Nation's community colleges and technical schools. These institutions, like the outstanding tech schools we have in South Dakota, provide students with associate's degrees, certificates, apprenticeships, opportunities to learn a trade, and more.

There are also things we can do to help students pay off loans without forcing taxpayers to shoulder the burden. In December of 2020, Congress passed a 5-year version of legislation that I introduced with Senator WARNER to allow employers to help employees repay their loans. Our Employer Participation in Repayment Act amends the Educational Assistance Program to permit employers to make tax-free payments on their employees' student loans. It is a win for employees, who get help paying off their student loans. And it is a win for employers who have a new option for attracting and retaining talented workers.

Our bill isn't a cure-all, but it will certainly help ease the pain of paying back student loans for a number of Americans. I am pleased that it was enacted into law for a 5-year period, and I hope at some point Congress will act to make it permanent.

Another big thing we can do, of course, is to make sure that graduates have access to good-paying jobs. This is key to enabling people to pay off their debt, and we should resolve to build on the economic progress that we had made prepandemic and focus on policies that will allow our economy to thrive.

Republicans are not alone in thinking that forgiving \$10,000 in student loan debt is fraught with problems. As one Democrat Senator said:

An across-the-board cancellation of college debt does nothing to address the absurd cost of college or fix our broken student loan program. It offers nothing to Americans who paid off their college debts or those who chose a lower-priced college to go to as a way of avoiding going into debt or taking on debt. . . . [R]eally importantly, it ignores the majority of Americans who never went to college, some of whom have debts just as staggering. . . .

That is from one of our Democrat colleagues here in the Senate.

The New York Times editorial board, not exactly known for toeing the Republican line, noted:

Canceling this debt, even in the limited amounts the White House is considering, would set a bad precedent and do nothing to change the fact that future students will graduate with yet more debt—along with the blind hope of another, future amnesty. Such a move is legally dubious, economically unsound, politically fraught and educationally problematic.

That was from the New York Times editorial board.

With inflation near a 40-year high, with the President's approval rating hitting a new low, and with Democrats' prospects for November looking less rosy, it is not exactly surprising that the President would look toward student loan forgiveness as a way of distracting voters or that some Democrats are reportedly pushing for student loan forgiveness as a way to boost their chances in November; but I very much hope that the President will decide that temporary political gain is not a good reason to put American taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars in student loan debt that is not their own.

As the New York Times noted, the President's plan is "legally dubious, economically unsound, politically fraught, and educationally problematic."

I strongly, strongly encourage the President to abandon a plan that even the Democratic Speaker of the House has suggested he doesn't have the authority to implement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

MR. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

MR. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, at 11:45 a.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session and vote on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 856, the nomination of Robert Steven Huie, as provided under the previous order, and that, following the vote, the Senate resume legislative session.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JANUARY 6 HEARINGS

MR. DURBIN. Mr. President, this evening, the Select Committee to investigate the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol will hold its first public hearing.

For more than 10 months, the January 6 Select Committee has labored diligently to discover and document the truth about the day we nearly lost our democracy. This evening, the committee will begin to lay out publicly, for the first time, the coordinated plan in place to overturn the results of the 2020 Presidential election and prevent the peaceful transition of power to a new administration in America. Those are incredible words that I have just spoken, but they reflect the reality of January 6, 2021.

Among the witnesses will be Capitol Police Officer Caroline Edwards, one of the more than 140 Capitol and Metropolitan police officers who was injured when the mob attacked the Capitol.

To Officer Edwards and all of the police officers who defended American democracy that day and who continue to

protect this Capitol every day, we owe more than our thanks.

January 6 revealed to the world how fragile democracy can be, even in America. Keeping our democracy requires vigilance and truth. Often, it requires sacrifice, and there must be a willingness to accept that truth. It is regrettable—no, it is shameful—that our Republican colleagues in the Senate filibustered the creation of an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate what happened on January 6.

I recall that moment, and I am sure the Presiding Officer does as well. It was slightly after 2 o'clock, just a few minutes after 2 o'clock. Vice President Pence was presiding over the U.S. Senate as we went through the orderly, constitutional process of counting the electoral votes. I looked up from my chair to see the Secret Service come in and physically remove—quickly remove—the Vice President from that chair. The events that unfolded in the next few minutes were hard to imagine could ever occur in the United States of America. We were told to sit safely in our chairs, in that this was a secure Chamber, and be prepared for other staffers from around the Capitol to join us. Not 10 minutes later, a member of the Capitol Police stood before us and said: As quickly as possible, evacuate this Chamber.

It is hard to imagine this in the United States of America. We have seen the videos. We know what happened. There is no doubt as to what happened that day and what an impression it must have left on the rest of the world. What would we think, at this moment in time, if a mob with battering rams beat down the doors of Parliament and entered the House of Commons and the House of Lords? Would we not say on this side of the ocean, my God, what has happened to the United Kingdom? Can this government survive? Can that country survive? The same questions were being asked about America because of that insurrectionist mob on January 6.

The proposal was made—and it was a legitimate, thoughtful, good-faith proposal—to establish a bipartisan commission to get to the bottom of it—who was behind it?—and to ask the hard questions. What role did President Donald Trump play in what unfolded after his rally on January 6, 2021? Some people don't even want to raise the question, let alone hear the answer.

History demands the truth, unless we have reached the point that we saw in the times of the Soviet Union when they refused to print in their daily newspapers plane crashes. It was bad news, and they didn't want to peddle any bad news in the official partisan organ, *Izvestia*. No. That was the reality of the Soviet Union—deny the truth, rewrite history. We see the same thing occurring today, but the American people are going to learn the truth.

All three major broadcast networks and all but one cable news network will

carry this evening's hearing live. What cable news network might not require the broadcast of this? I am going to guess FOX News, and I am right. Think about that for a second. Clearly, to FOX News, which profits off the Big Lie of Donald Trump, it matters more to continue that relationship than to tell the truth to their viewers.

The members of the Select Committee have undertaken their duty with uncommon courage, and I want to single out, in particular, Congressman ADAM KINZINGER from the State of Illinois. We are not close friends, but we have worked on a few things together. I have the highest regard and admiration for the courage that he has shown throughout this travail; and the fact that he would volunteer, against the wishes of the Republican House leadership, to make this committee bipartisan is a tribute to his citizenship and to his commitment to this Nation.

The same thing, of course, is true for Representative LIZ CHENEY. She has a lot at stake. Representative KINZINGER has announced his retirement. She continues to represent Wyoming, and I hope she will for many years to come. I may disagree with her on virtually every other issue, but I have respect for her courage in serving on this bipartisan committee.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS

MR. President, on another topic, it is no secret that the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been plagued by misconduct. One investigation after another has revealed a culture of abuse, mismanagement, corruption, torture, and death that reaches all the way to the top.

One of the most troubling investigations was published last week by National Public Radio and the Marshall Project. The title of the report reads: "How the Newest Federal Prison Became One of the Deadliest"—the facility in question I know well: U.S. Penitentiary Thomson. It is located in my home State of Illinois. In fact, it is a facility that I officially and originally encouraged the Federal Government to purchase in order to reduce overcrowding in high security prisons. The opening of U.S. Penitentiary Thomson was supposed to improve safety within the Bureau of Prisons, but the reality, sadly, has been the exact opposite.

According to this report, seven inmates at U.S. Penitentiary Thomson have died in just 2 years. Five of them were reportedly murdered by other inmates; two died by suicide. And those deaths are just a snapshot of the grim reality of this facility—the deadly, grim reality. The investigation paints a picture of rampant abuse by prison staff. This alleged abuse includes the excessive use of two kinds of painful restraints—ambulatory restraints and four-point restraints. The "four" refers to each of a person's limbs, which, under this technique, are chained to a concrete bed, rendering the individual immobile.

This is an American penitentiary. The Bureau of Prisons' protocol says

that these restraints should be used sparingly and only to momentarily—momentarily—restrain an inmate who presents an active danger to himself or others.

According to this report, some guards at U.S. Penitentiary Thomson have, apparently, made a habit of regularly using these restraints on inmates—not momentarily but regularly. In some cases, inmates have reportedly been left chained for hours and days.

A lawyer who has spoken with U.S. Penitentiary Thomson inmates said:

[The inmates] are denied food. They are denied water. Many of them report being left in their own waste. It's really akin to a torture chamber.

This is an American prison in my State.

The use of restraints and shackles has become so common, inmates have coined a term to describe the scars they leave on their arms and legs. It is known as the "Thomson tattoo."

The report also alleges that the staff at U.S. Penitentiary Thomson have gained a reputation for stoking tensions between cellmates. Make no mistake, this is a special management unit. These are inmates who can be very dangerous, and I understand that. I understood it when the penitentiary was opened.

One example that was highlighted in this report is indicative of the challenge. It was the murder of Matthew Phillips, a U.S. Penitentiary Thomson inmate who died in 2020. Mr. Phillips was a Jewish man with a visible Star of David tattoo. The corrections officers at U.S. Penitentiary Thomson reportedly locked Mr. Phillips in a recreation cage with two known White supremacists. These inmates beat Mr. Phillips until he was unconscious, and he died from his injuries 3 days later. Both men have since been indicted by the Justice Department on murder and hate crime charges.

Following the publication of this shocking report, I joined Senator DUCKWORTH, my colleague from Illinois, and Illinois Congresswoman CHERI BUSTOS, sending a letter to the Justice Department's Inspector General Michael Horowitz. In it, we urged him to launch a full-scale, immediate investigation into the failures at Thomson prison.

I spoke with General Horowitz yesterday. He confirmed that his office is investigating the deaths at Thomson, along with many other abuses in the Bureau of Prisons.

But this report about U.S. Penitentiary Thomson is only the most recent look into the house of horrors that is the Bureau of Prisons, the Federal Bureau of Prisons. We already have ample evidence of a pattern of neglect and abuse that has been embedded in their bureaucracy.

Consider, for instance, the Bureau's overuse of restricted housing—the practice of separating inmates from the general prison population, isolating them alone or with one other person

for 24 hours at a time. The practice can cause severe mental anguish for inmates and can severely harm the prospects for ever reentering society.

Much like the use of four-point restraints, restricted housing should, as the Justice Department noted in 2016, "be used rarely, applied fairly, and subjected to reasonable constraints." That is the standard, the published standard, of the Bureau of Prisons.

During the Obama administration, I held two hearings, which are still fresh on my mind they were so gripping, on the issue of solitary confinement. Following those hearings, the Justice Department took steps to reduce and reform the Bureau of Prisons' use of restricted housing. We started to make real progress.

Unfortunately, the progress was erased during the Trump administration. And since the former President left office, the Biden Department of Justice has had plenty of time to change course and leadership. And I have urged them to do so.

A year and a half into this administration, nearly 8 percent of BOP inmates are still being held in restricted housing. That is the same level it was under President Trump. That is just plain unacceptable. The continued overuse of restricted housing and the alleged abuses at Thomson are among the many instances of misconduct and mismanagement that have occurred under the failed leadership of Bureau of Prisons' Director Michael Carvajal.

In light of those earlier reports detailing similar failures, I called for Mr. Carvajal's resignation last November. So it was welcome news when, about 6 weeks after I asked for his resignation, he announced it. Mr. Carvajal said he was going to resign.

But that was January. Now we are in June, and the Justice Department has shown little progress or urgency in naming Carvajal's replacement. As a result, he is still running and mismanaging the Bureau of Prisons.

This recent investigation at Thomson makes it clear there are no excuses for further delay. So today I am calling on President Biden, Attorney General Garland, and Deputy Attorney General Monaco to do one of two things; either name a new reform-minded Director to replace Carvajal immediately or appoint an Acting Director until a permanent selection is made. This cannot wait. We need to act before another inmate dies in the custody and care of this Federal Government.

In the coming weeks, the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, will be holding a hearing on the Bureau of Prisons. We will examine these allegations of abuse at Thomson and other facilities. We need answers from the Biden administration on the failure to reduce the use of restricted housing, and we will discuss what BOP must do to address the staffing crisis that has contributed to this disastrous situation.

The crisis demands the attention of the highest ranking officials within the

Department of Justice. It has been long overdue. It is time for us to have competent, principled leadership at the Bureau of Prisons.

I am not condemning every person who works at that Agency, for sure. I have met many of them and respect them. But those who are guilty of this misconduct need to be held accountable, and new leadership is imperative.

It has been a long time since we have had that kind of competent, principled leadership. I believe that Attorney General Garland and Deputy Attorney General Monaco will choose the right leader to clear out the bureaucratic rot and improve with significant reforms. But we need to act quickly. Lives are at stake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last couple of weeks, many of us have spent a lot of time thinking about the horrific shootings in Uvalde, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, these are familiar scenes that we have seen before, and we would like to try to find a way to reduce the likelihood of their reoccurrence in the future if there is anything we can do here in the Senate to make that possible. So I have been working particularly with Senator MURPHY, who was my partner on the Fix NICS bill that we passed in 2018.

Senator MURPHY comes from a blue State, Connecticut; I come from a red State, Texas. Yet, in that example, we were able to take the horrible events of Sutherland Springs, where innocent parishioners were gunned down at a small Baptist church outside of San Antonio, and take out of that tragedy something good, which is a bill we call Fix NICS, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Since that was signed into law, 11½ million new records have been uploaded into the background check system, and I believe that has saved lives.

You will recall, in that case, the shooter was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, but, unfortunately, he had a troubled history: felony convictions, domestic violence, mental health adjudications. None of that was in the background check system. It should have been, and it would have disqualified him had it been known. But he did what so often happens; he lied, and then he bought—the lie and buy—and tragedy ensued. We were all sickened by these shootings, and we are hyperaware of the public interest.

The most common refrain I hear is: Do something. Do something. Unfortunately, it gets a little less specific after that what exactly should be done, and that is where the hard work begins.

But, as before, I am optimistic that we can find something that protects the rights of law-abiding citizens under our Constitution, under the Second Amendment, who, I believe, are not a

threat to public safety, and focus on people with criminal records, people with mental health challenges, like young Salvador Ramos in Uvalde, TX; like Adam Lanza at Sandy Hook.

The profile is pretty well established—young, alienated, disaffected, mentally challenged boys who lack access to treatment which will help them manage their mental illness and who descend into a pit of despair, ultimately resulting in their desire not only to harm themselves but to take other people with them. That profile is well established in the scientific literature. And the New York Times did an excellent piece a couple of weeks ago on that profile. So I think that gives us a little bit of a roadmap for the sorts of things we might do to deal with that.

What makes this more challenging than, for example, the Fix NICS bill after Sutherland Springs is that was a singular point of failure. Here, we see multiple points of failure, and I think we need to address as many as we can.

So as I mentioned, the mental health issue looms large. We know that during the 2 years, where many students were isolated at home, trying to keep up with their studies virtually, many of them have languished, many of them have fallen behind. And because they have been isolated from their peers at a time when their social development is the most important, many of them have fallen into despair, exacerbating underlying problems that they may have in the first place. So trying to figure out how to support our schools and our communities with resources needed to address the mental and emotional health of people who are struggling, particularly young students, that seems like an obvious area that we can work on together.

Obviously, school security is important. The initial reports in Uvalde were that the door was propped open that Salvador Ramos entered. Later, we found out that, no, it wasn't propped open, but the lock didn't work. He just walked right in.

There are a lot of studies and best practices when it comes to what is necessary to secure our schools. If we can secure our airports post-9/11, we can secure our schools to make sure that people who should come in and out of those schools can do so relatively easily but that outsiders cannot and particularly those who are a threat to the safety of those students.

I think all of us want to try to find ways to reduce the likelihood of something like this happening again, and school districts across the country are eager to get our help and guidance to harden their infrastructure to provide for the personnel, resource officers—that is the local police officer on the school campus. Those are things that I think would diminish the likelihood of another Uvalde.

Mental health and school safety seem to me as kind of no-brainers, in a sense, where I don't think there is a lot

of division between that side of the aisle and this side of the aisle.

But we are also looking at ways to keep guns out of the hands of people who already, by law, are prohibited from having them. I am not talking necessarily about expanding the background check system; I want to make sure the background check system works.

What makes this challenging is Salvador Ramos showed up after his 18th birthday as if he were born yesterday. For purposes of the background check system, there was no insight into his many mental health challenges or terroristic threats of fellow students, potentially drug use, and other things that if he were an adult, he could not pass a background check. But because of the fact that juvenile records are typically sealed and are not part of the NICS review, the merchant who sold him the firearms he used didn't know anything about his track record.

But we know how, as I said earlier, that he fits a familiar profile. He shot his own grandmother because she wanted him to go back to school after being out of school for the last 2 years. He engaged in self-mutilation, self-cutting, tortured animals, made threats against his fellow students, threatened sexual assault against his fellow female students, and made threats that he would, in fact, do what he ultimately did online. He was a ticking timebomb.

So if there is some way for us to look back into the sorts of records that would disqualify an adult if they had occurred post-18—because they would have been public records available to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System—if there is a way to look back and identify people like Salvador Ramos, who, by virtue of his mental health and other problems, we would know he should not be able to purchase a firearm legally.

A couple of States—I think it is South Carolina and Virginia—voluntarily upload mental health adjudications for 17-year-olds. We can't compel other States to do that, but we can sure provide—we can facilitate other States doing so and incentivize their populating the NICS background check system with this necessary information for juveniles, who ultimately will end up—they will turn of age and be able to buy a firearm, and we need to know ahead of time, for purposes of the background check system, what those records look like.

So there are a number of things that we could do. One suggestion is, for example, to take a look at the background check process itself for 18- to 21-year-olds in particular since that is the population we are focusing on based on this profile.

Under current law, if you go in and buy a firearm and you have a clean record, you can pass your background check pretty quickly. In 90 percent of cases, that is actually what happens. The average processing time is 2 min-

utes. In most cases, the system returns a binary result: You either pass or you don't pass, you fail. When you fail, that means you can't purchase a firearm.

Now, the Congress, the Senate—in particular, Senator COONS from Delaware and I sponsored a bill that would notify local police when somebody goes in to take a background check and fails because they don't qualify. Many times, the local law enforcement knows more about these people and would be interested to know that they tried to illegally purchase a firearm and were denied.

But in about 10 percent of the gun purchases, the background check is not resolved immediately. The system returns a yellow light, which means additional review is required. For example, if you have a common name like John Smith, the search may pull records for somebody else, for the wrong person with the same name who is prohibited from purchasing a gun. It could also be caused by incomplete criminal history—for example, if somebody is convicted of assault but on further examination, you find out it was domestic violence, which is a prohibited category. You would also learn whether it was a felony or a misdemeanor.

In those cases, the FBI, under current law, already has 3 days in which to complete the background check. The problem is, under current law, there are no finish—the seller still sells the gun, and we have an incomplete record.

Dylann Roof, I believe, was the name of the shooter at the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, SC. As it turned out, he had a misdemeanor drug offense that was not uploaded into the background check system.

Now, it is a disqualifying condition if you are addicted to or a frequent user of illegal drugs, but because the background check system did not allow enough time to include that information—maybe, just maybe, he would have been denied the purchase of the firearms that he ultimately used to kill those innocent people that day.

So what we are looking at is the possibility of—in those cases where there is what I will call a yellow flag or an indication that further review is necessary—an extended period of time, for this class of purchasers between 18 and 21, for the background check system to complete their review.

Well, I have said it before, and I will say it again: I don't believe law-abiding, mentally well gun owners are going to commit mass shootings or are a threat to public safety. I know within the Senate, we have a number of people who are sportsmen; who enjoy target shooting, let's say; who believe that they need to exercise their Second Amendment rights in order to protect their family and their homes. They are not a threat. So blanket limitations or prohibitions on those law-abiding citizens who are not a threat to public safety and never will be, to me, strikes as overreach.

We are not talking about a discretionary right; we are talking about a

constitutional right. But I do believe that the Second Amendment and sound public policy are not mutually exclusive here, and that is the needle we are trying to thread here. So adding juvenile records to the NICS system is a commonsense way to ensure we have a complete picture of the buyer's history.

Then, of course, there is the scandal of our mental health delivery system in the United States today. Back in the sixties, when people who had mental health challenges were institutionalized, we finally figured out that that didn't work very well; it was inhumane. The theory was that there would be created some safety net in communities across the country where people could turn; where the police, if they answered a 9-1-1 call and they realized that this isn't a criminal, that this is somebody going through a mental health crisis—where the police could take people where they could actually get help, get treated, get counseling, and get better. That doesn't exist today in many communities—in the major cities perhaps, even in suburban areas, but Uvalde, TX, population 15,000, not so much.

So we are looking at ways to expand the community-based mental health system. Senator STABENOW and Senator BLUNT have a great proposal that would extend the current eight-State pilot program nationwide. Now, is that solely related to what happened at Uvalde or what happened in Buffalo or what happened in Philadelphia? No, but it would address the larger underlying challenge of more and more Americans falling through the cracks.

While we know most people in a mental health crisis are not going to commit acts of violence, we also know that 60 percent of the gun-related deaths are suicides. And as it occurred to me like a light went off in my head, Salvador Ramos, Adam Lanza, and others of this profile of young men, in addition to the multiple homicides they commit, they commit suicide. They know they are not going to make it out alive.

So addressing this mental health crisis that affects our country and particularly where we fail these young men who feel like they have nowhere else to turn, who become increasingly isolated, become increasingly desensitized to the idea of taking someone's life because they are sitting in their room playing video games, killing people virtually all the time, and then, in their bizarre fantasies, decide to extend those fantasies to taking not only their own life but the lives of other innocent people.

So this is challenging, Mr. President, and there is no doubt about it, but we can do this. We can do this. Sometimes politics is called the art of the possible, and I think this is possible. Is it going to be perfect? Are we going to not have to revisit some other scenario where people have fallen through the cracks or where vulnerabilities are exposed? No, we can't be sure that this is one

and done. But I do believe there is a sense of urgency, not only here in the Congress but in the White House and across the country. We have all heard from our constituents, who are in anguish over what has happened in Uvalde and elsewhere. The cry is to do something. Like I said, that is not very specific. And I understand, but it is up to us to try to find what is the right set of policies that would respect the rights of law-abiding citizens under the Constitution but at the same time address what we know is a huge mental health crisis in this country and make sure that the systems that are in place work, like the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

We need to populate that system with the relevant information that would disqualify somebody, if they were an adult, if it occurred while they were a juvenile. There are ways we can do that. We can incentivize that. We can take a look back in some cases. We can allow the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, in those limited cases where they need to do further review, to see that the information is complete.

We can figure this out, and I think, on a bipartisan basis, there is a will to do so. Around here, if there is a will, there is a way, and I believe we do have the will and we will find a way.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, secondly, I would ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak even though it may go a moment or two longer and that the vote be delayed to allow me to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to speak this morning really to America's veterans and provide an update on our work to get our toxic exposure legislation across the finish line.

The Senate is in the midst of considering the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act. This is historic. It is bipartisan.

I hope that we can keep it becoming, when something is bipartisan, that it is historic because we ought to be able to solve these problems for veterans and really for Americans in a way that brings us together and not pulls us apart, and this is an effort to show that that can be done. This legislation will deliver on a promise we made as a country to take care of our service men and women, both when they deploy and when they come home.

The Heath Robinson Act will provide access to healthcare and benefits for millions of veterans who are sick from

illnesses connected with toxic exposures.

When we send our warfighters into harm's way, it is with the understanding that we will have their back. When they come home bearing physical, mental, or invisible wounds of war, we care for those wounds. Toxic wounds should not be treated differently.

John Buckley, a retired U.S. Army colonel from Andover, KS, told me:

Our Soldiers were put into dangerous situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. And many who suffered from their wounds or made the ultimate sacrifice have been cared for by our nation. Unfortunately, many too have been overlooked and ignored. Especially those who are suffering from injuries after having recurring and prolonged exposure to toxic fumes, burn pits and other environmental hazards.

This legislation is designed to address what the retired colonel told me.

Another Army colonel, this one from Leavenworth, KS, Pat Proctor, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, shared that many of the men and women he served with are facing health challenges from being exposed to toxins while deployed. He said:

There is no telling—[there is no telling]—how many of us will be impacted as we get older.

I know many of our veterans live with the lingering fear, will the toxic exposures from their service catch up with them and leave them with a debilitating disease? And if that happens, will the VA be there? Will Americans be there for them with the healthcare and benefits they need?

William Turner, the former deputy commander general of support for Kansas's own Fort Riley First Infantry Division, told me:

Our Veterans have served in multiple locations where they have been exposed to a number of toxins that have resulted in them developing serious illnesses, and they often struggle to gain access to health care and benefits that help alleviate some of the pain and suffering they are experiencing.

Sometimes we think these issues are something people in Washington, DC, are talking about, but what we are trying to address is the real circumstances of real Americans who have served our Nation and who are deserving of our attention.

The former deputy commanding general went on to say—to note this:

It is absolutely imperative that we pass this bill to guarantee exposed veterans receive permanent access to health care.

Moving legislation through Congress can be a slow and frustrating process. However, this week, when the Senate began debate on our bill, I was encouraged by the resounding show of confidence. This bill—to move forward on this bill, that vote was 86 Senators in favor.

We are now focused on an amendment process and will continue working as quickly as the Senate will allow to get this bill to the House and back on its way to the President's desk.

Whether Democrat or Republican, every Member of this Chamber represents veterans at home, and I firmly

believe that every Member in this Chamber cares about those veterans. Issues related to veterans often have a way of bringing us together to find consensus, and that is what we have been attempting to do and we will continue to do as we sort out what amendments could be considered.

We were able to deliver veterans choice through the MISSION Act, landmark mental health legislation through the John Scott Hannon Mental Health Improvement Act, and I believe we can do that again on this legislation to deliver care and benefits to all generations of toxic-exposed veterans.

This country is good at recognizing the physical wounds of war, and we are getting better at recognizing the mental wounds of war, but no longer can we ignore the wounds of war from toxic exposure—the wounds, like Agent Orange before it, that may not arrive until years later.

Throughout the remaining procedural votes on the Heath Robinson Act, I urge my colleagues with remaining questions or concerns to reach out so we can all, together, deliver on this promise to those who have borne the battle. I look forward to working with my colleagues to see that this bill crosses the finish line soon.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Robert Steven Huie, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

VOTE ON HUIE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Huie nomination?

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 223 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Booker	Cardin
Bennet	Brown	Carper
Blumenthal	Cantwell	Casey

Collins	Klobuchar	Rosen
Coons	Leahy	Schatz
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Schumer
Duckworth	Manchin	Shaheen
Durbin	Markey	Sinema
Feinstein	Menendez	Smith
Gillibrand	Merkley	Stabenow
Hassan	Murkowski	Tester
Heinrich	Murphy	Van Hollen
Hickenlooper	Murray	Warner
Hirono	Ossoff	Warnock
Kaine	Padilla	Warren
Kelly	Peters	Whitehouse
King	Reed	Wyden

NAYS—46

Barrasso	Hagerty	Romney
Blackburn	Hawley	Rounds
Blunt	Hoeven	Rubio
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Braun	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Capito	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Tillis
Cruz	Marshall	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young
Graham	Portman	
Grassley	Risch	

NOT VOTING—3

Burr	Cramer	Sanders
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Maryland.

LGBTQI+ PRIDE MONTH 2022

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this June marks 53 years since the attack on the Stonewall Inn and 52 years since the first pride parade was held in New York City. The Stonewall riots are widely recognized as the catalyst for the resurgence of the fight for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex—LGBTQI+—rights, and they were the first in a series of landmark events that would define the LGBTQ experience of the late 20th century.

From the UpStairs Lounge arson attack to the devastating AIDS crisis, the community persevered through many harrowing ordeals. During this month, we recognize not only the struggles of the LGBTQ community but the triumphs, both big and small.

Not nearly as well known, the UpStairs Lounge arson attack took place nearly 4 years after the Stonewall riots, on June 24, 1973. Patrons of the New Orleans bar, which primarily served as a safe meeting space for blue-collar gay men, noticed a fire in the front stairwell just before 8 p.m. The fire spread rapidly, forcing patrons to flee to the rooftop and out the barred windows to escape. Unfortunately, this was not enough. Twenty-eight people lost their lives in the blaze, and four more succumbed to their injuries in the following days. This horrendous act would go on to become the deadliest at-

tack on the LGBTQ community until the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016, which claimed the lives of 49 individuals. Both of these attacks took place during Pride Month, a month that celebrates love, acceptance, and community.

The celebration of Pride Month also allows members of the LGBTQ community to reassert their rights to openly be their true selves and say: "We are here. We are not going away." This message is especially important now, as the Supreme Court prepares to vote on potentially overriding *Roe v. Wade*, the decision that protects an individual's right to privacy and control over their own bodies. Justice Samuel Alito's reasoning in this argument, though not final, threatens an entire line of rights that the Court has inferred from the text of the Constitution over decades, including foundational protections for the LGBTQ people such as marriage equality, established in the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision.

I am an original cosponsor of the Equality Act, S. 393, which would safeguard and protect equal rights for the LGBTQ individuals in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, Federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. I am also the lead sponsor of the resolution to eliminate the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which would strengthen the constitutional foundation for pro-LGBTQ legislation like the Equality Act.

I strongly oppose action by the Supreme Court to take away the rights of Americans by overturning *Roe* or *Obergefell* or other cases like *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which guarantees the rights of families to have access to contraception and family planning.

While I am proud that Maryland has, at the State level, protections in place to preserve the sanctity of same-sex marriage should these rights come under threat at a Federal level, such fundamental rights must be respected at the national level. As many have pointed out, Supreme Court decisions to overturn precedent have historically expanded individual rights, not taken them away.

LGBTQ Pride Month is an integral part of our community here in Maryland. Parades and celebrations are taking place all across the State, from Salisbury to Cumberland. As an ally, I am committed to uplifting and supporting the LGBTQ voices. In particular, we must make a special effort to protect transgender children and their parents and safeguard their access to healthcare and social services during these challenging times.

As extremism grows louder in many States, we must stand united and firm in the face of injustice and continue to proclaim that love has been and always will be love.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The clerk will call the roll.